7 Vol.

Humbly inſcribed to PARLIAMENT.

1027. b. 16 / 6

TWO LETTERS ON THE FLOUR TRADE, AND DEARNESS of CORN:

WHEREIN

The former is vindicated, and the Cauſe of the latter explained; and the Miſtakes and Miſrepreſentations of ignorant, and merely theoretic Writers, are confuted.

By a PERSON in BUSINESS.

Semper ego auditor tantùm, nunquamne reponam?

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE firſt of theſe Letters was written ſeveral years ago, when the complaints were much the ſame as at preſent; and the ſituation of things not unlike. It had the credit of convincing the gentleman to whom it was addreſſed, of ſome miſtakes which he had to haſtily fallen into in his thoughts on the ſubject.

The ſecond letter was drawn up with the ſame view of correcting popular errors: and ſuggeſting ſome uſeful hints to conſideration on a ſubject of great national importance. If they contain obſervations founded on a juſt view of things, warranted by experience, and conſiſtent with ſound policy to adopt, they will be well received, as every man has an intereſt in them, as every man eats.

LETTER I.

To ------- -------, Esq.

SIR,

I HAVE, at your requeſt, read the ſeveral pamphlets lately publiſhed, reſpecting the preſent high price of corn; and, in obedience to your commands, ſend you my thoughts concerning them. I know you have candour to overlook in me any inelegancies of compoſition; that you will prefer truth and fact to declamation; and excuſe the want of embelliſhment, or an accurate arrangement of thoughts, where the *caſe is honeſtly ſtated*, and *every thing* advanced by men, who appear to be perfect ſtrangers to trade and commerce, *fully anſwered*. As the charge is brought by theſe gentlemen principally againſt us, leſt an entire ſilence on the part of the Mealmen * ſhould be taken for a confeſſion

* By *Mealmen* is here meant not Griſt Millers, but thoſe who carry on the flour trade only.

of guilt, I thought it neceſſary to write, though I could have wiſhed that ſome perſon better qualified, would have undertaken it. In expectation of this, I have waited ſome time; but every one having hitherto declined the taſk, the following is preſented you; and, it is hoped, will be ſufficient to remove thoſe prejudices which have, without the leaſt foundation in juſtice, been entertained of a buſineſs, in all reſpects calculated to benefit, and not to diſtreſs, the Poor.

I have not been able to read what theſe writers have aſſerted, without the greateſt indignation, to think that men of learning and capacity, as it muſt be owned ſome of them appear to be, ſhould trifle ſo egregiouſly, by writing upon ſubjects which they are abſolute ſtrangers to; as their writings muſt, to any perſon in the leaſt acquainted with the market, with trade in general, and the flour trade in particular, plainly evince.

Theſe gentlemen are of opinion, that the preſent high price of grain is owing,

Firſt, To the engroſſing it.

Secondly, To a combination between the farmer, miller, and baker.

Thirdly, To the flour-mills.

Under

Under the firſt head they aſſure us, that there is a great plenty of corn in the kingdom; and that the advance upon it, before and ſince harveſt, hath not been owing to any real ſcarcity, but entirely to the villainy of the dealers; who, by *engroſſing* it, have advanced the price, and almoſt ſtarved the *poor*.

To remedy this evil, it is propoſed that it be enacted, that no corn ſhall be ſold any where but in open market, at the uſual hours of ſelling grain. But, they ſhould have known, that there is already a law in being to this purpoſe, which the occupiers of mills in, or near to, ſome market towns, would be well pleaſed to ſee put in execution, if poſſible, and that none ſhould be bought by ſample; ſenſible how much the trade of thoſe towns, as well as their own intereſt, is affected by it. But, perhaps, this is not to be obtained; thoſe mills may not be ſufficient for grinding the corn that is wanting to be ground. There are villages in many parts of the kingdom at a conſiderable diſtance from any market town; mills in their neighbourhood, and large farms, which grow much corn; but, ſhall this corn be carried ten or twelve miles, or farther, to ſome market town, bought there, and brought back again to ſerve thoſe mills, and ſupply thoſe villages, &c.? Surely no one, endowed with common ſenſe, will ſay, that ſuch a law is calculated for the relief of the poor,

or the benefit of the public. But, not to dwell on this, to aſſert that the high price of corn has, at this time, been owing to the engroſſing it, is a very great miſtake, and can proceed from nothing but ignorance or prejudice.

It is plain to common ſenſe, that if no quantities of corn any time before, or ſince harveſt, when the riſe began, were to be found laid up in ſtore-houſes or granaries, this could not be the cauſe of it. I live in a corn county, where there are as many ſtore-houſes, perhaps, as in any county in the kingdom, convenient for laying up corn; but theſe ſtore-houſes are, at this time, quite empty; not one buyer has any quantity of corn by him; nor has had for a conſiderable time; which, I am pretty ſure, is univerſally the caſe at preſent throughout the kingdom. I challenge any one of theſe writers to prove the contrary. I may differ, perhaps, from moſt people, but I cannot think that engroſſing is ever a crime. No perſon would buy corn merely upon ſpeculation, when the price is at 10 *l.* or 12 *l.* per load, to keep it by him in expectation of a farther advance. When corn is engroſſed, (if I may uſe the term in a good ſenſe) it is at a time when there is a great plenty, and the price low; which corn, if it be kept till a time of ſcarcity, and then ſold out, is really of ſervice to the poor: And, by the way, had the ſtore-houſes and mills been well filled at this

this time, it never would have got up to the price it has done.

Secondly. Another thing, to which they aſcribe the high price of corn, is a combination; which they ſuppoſe the farmer, miller, and baker, to have entered into for this purpoſe. This, ſurely, is ſo very idle and ridiculous, as not to deſerve a ſerious refutation. Every one that is at all acquainted with the markets, knows, that the farmer will ever ſell as dear as he can; and that the dealer will buy as cheap as he can; the latter never having learned that the dearer he buys his wheat, the more will be his profit. The profit of the miller, indeed, who grinds for toll, is ever proportionate to the current price of grain; but as he does nothing in the market he is free from the imputation. The meal-man's profit may be more when wheat is at 5 *l.* than when it is at 10 *l.* per load: he can then carry on his buſineſs with much leſs capital; and therefore it is his intereſt to keep it low. And let me add, that he never refuſes to grind wheat for the poor at three-pence per buſhel let the price be what it will; and, for the induſtrious poor, when wheat is at a high price, he will often grind it toll-free.

Thirdly. I now come to the laſt head, the grand evil of all, the flour-mills. One of theſe writers aſſures us, that it is certainly for the benefit of the poor; and then,

by

by parity of reaſon, ſay I, for every body elſe, to purchaſe their corn before it is ground. But how does he make this appear? Why, you have his honeſt word for it, who, it is more than probable, never bought a quarter of corn in the market in all his life. But, to ſupport it, he tells you a tale, or quotes a ſecret, which, for the life of me, I cannot conceive how he came at the knowledge of, unleſs he has been bribing one of our men; or, as I am rather inclined to think, been tampering with one of our girls. This ſlut has told him, that two thirds of what is commonly called ſack flour, is made from wheats. The diſcloſing of this, will be a terrible ſtroke to us; becauſe hereupon our profit chiefly depended. Forty per cent. and ſix returns in a year—now it is out—we muſt never expect to ſee any more!—Surely this writer, when he had got the ſecret, might have made a better bargain for himſelf, not to have * blabb'd it abroad! But what a pity it is, when he was upon it, that he had not gone one ſtep further, and told the world what the other third was made of?—Not, ſurely, of an author's brains; for, if no one had more than himſelf, all the authors in the univerſe would not furniſh a ſufficient quantity to make good one ſack. But, to be ſerious, theſe writers ſhould have a greater re-

* Four or five capital mealmen lately failing in this county, is no very evident proof that the buſineſs is attended with exceſſive profit.

gard

gard to truth and decency in what they publiſh. What a mean opinion muſt they have of their readers, to think them capable of being impoſed on by ſuch fooliſh ſtories, ſuch idle and extravagant calculations, which nobody ever did, or can believe; and which, it is plain, they believe not themſelves? If they did, they would have done as the merchant in the goſpel did, who had found the pearl of great price; they would have gone and ſold all that they had, and bought a mill.

You are further told, that the farmers refuſe to ſell to a poor man a buſhel of wheat, becauſe they can make an exorbitant price of it to the mealman, whereby the poor are laid under the neceſſity of buying flour, ſo very much to their prejudice: for theſe reaſons, and on account of the extravagant profits annexed to this branch of trade, he gives it as his opinion, that all the flour mills ought to be ſuppreſſed; and that wheat never can be cheap any more while they are ſtanding. Had not this writer been more ignorant than an old woman, he never would have talked in this manner. Every one that hath tried, knows, by experience, that this is far from being true. It was at firſt the great difference which people found upon trial, between buying wheat and buying flour, that ſo ſuddenly and univerſally brought them to prefer the latter: and it is the ſame

acknowledged

acknowledged difference, which engages them to continue it. The farmers are ſo far convinced of this, that many of them will buy a ſack, or half a ſack, of flour at a time for their families, finding they can ſerve them conſiderably cheaper with it, than with their own wheat. A day-labourer, who has any thing of a family, will ſave by buying flour ſix-pence, nine-pence, or twelve-pence per week: wherefore, they have ſo little reaſon to complain againſt their maſters, for not ſparing them wheat; that they have, on the contrary, the greateſt cauſe to complain, that they are compelled by ſome of them to take wheat, when they know that they could ſave conſiderably by laying out their own money in flour.

But the charge brought againſt the farmers for refuſing to ſell to the poor in ſmall quantities, is without foundation. In all markets where I have been concerned, the farmers never left off to bring wheat for this purpoſe, 'till the poor, finding the benefit of buying flour, left off to purchaſe it.

It is well known to you, Sir, as well as to many others, that wheat bearing but a low price for ſome years before the late advance, it was, by the farmers, and old corn-buyers, imputed to the flour-mills; and they were ſtrongly perſuaded, and frequently aſſerted, that wheat would never obtain a price again, till

'till the flour-mills were down.—How ſtrangely the caſe is altered!

I hope, Sir, you are already convinced, that the flour-mills are adapted to benefit, and not to diſtreſs, the poor. But, I have one thing more to ſubjoin, which will put the matter out of queſtion, ſince all people will be true to their own intereſt. The bakers, not many years ago, bought their own wheats, had them ground at the water-mills; and, either with hand or horſe-mills, dreſſed their own flour. You will allow, that they muſt have, in this way, very great advantages in every article, beyond what a private houſe-keeper can pretend to. And yet no ſooner had they an opportunity to procure their flour from the water-mills, but, upon trial, finding the advantage of it, they fell in with it, and their hand and horſe-mills were laid aſide. I have heard a baker (who, through prejudice to cuſtom, continued in the old way, ſeveral years after others had quitted it) ſay, "That "he was ſome hundreds of pounds the worſe "for not buying his flour ſooner, as others "had done." But, what need of all this debate? We appeal to fact. Let the matter be tried; it may ſoon be brought to an iſſue. Will the money that buys one buſhel of flour, buy wheat enough to make 72lb. of bread, of equal fineneſs? If it will, I give up the point.

It muſt be allowed, that whatever has a tendency, *upon the whole*, to leſſen the quantity of grain in any country, muſt proportionably tend to enhance the price. But flour-mills have no *ſuch tendency*. It will be ſaid, perhaps, if the flour be *exported* they have. Not more, ſurely, than if ſent abroad in wheat.—But I deny that exportation tends, upon the whole, to leſſen the quantity, or enhance the price. This has been plainly made appear by many, but particularily by an ingenious gentleman*, who I could have wiſhed to have reſumed the pen at this time: But, I preſume he thought that none could expoſe thoſe writers more than they did themſelves. —As for thoſe who think that exportation makes corn ſcarce and dear, let them conſider, that, if no corn be wanted but for home conſumption, no more will be ſowed, than is judged neceſſary for that demand; but if this crop ſhould greatly fail, then a dearth muſt enſue, and many people ſtarve. On the other hand, if corn be ſown with a view to exportation, though the crop ſhould very much fail, yet there will probably be ſtill enough to ſupply the home conſumption, and to prevent a famine. Therefore, exportation, for this reaſon, if for no other, ought to be encouraged.

* The State of the Corn-Trade, printed for Birt, 1753.

The

The great importance of the corn trade, and the many advantages ariſing to the public from the exportation, have been fully and unanſwerably made appear by the judicious author above referred to; and it is needleſs to obſerve, that every argument he brings in favour hereof, concludes more ſtrongly for the exportation of flour and biſcuit; becauſe the corn, in being manufactured, employs a greater number of hands, and conſequently, in proportion, adds to the benefit.

But when, through a failure of the crop, the price of grain gets exceſſive high, it certainly is neceſſary, that there ſhould be a temporary ſtop put to the exportation of it.

We have now a proclamation for putting in force certain acts made in the 5th and 6th of Edward the VIth. and in the 5th of Elizabeth. In conſequence hereof, the farmers are obliged to bring their corn into open market for ſale:——but all people are convinced, by experience, that the proclamation does not anſwer the end which was expected from it, though the greateſt ſtreſs is laid upon it, by every one that has written on the ſubject.

I think it has been made appear that theſe gentlemen are miſtaken in every particular which they aſſign as the real cauſe of the preſent high price of grain.

But you, Sir, will be ready to aſk, What then is the real cauſe? The fact, you will ſay, is unqueſtionable; corn is dear every where throughout the kingdom; extreme dear in many parts of it; and, as there muſt be ſome cauſe for it, what do you ſuppoſe it to be?

With ſubmiſſion, Sir, I ſhall give you my ſentiments of the matter, without mentioning a word about foreſtalling, regrating, engroſſing; or of kidders, badgers, and none knows what; as if the dearneſs of corn were owing to certain hard words.

I take the caſe to be neither more nor leſs than a real ſcarcity: not but that I think the price at preſent too high, to ſquare with the crop. Several accidents have contributed to make it ſo; of which I ſhall give you as ſuccinct a narrative as I can.

You will allow me to go ſo far back as the harveſt of 1755; which you muſt note was very light; a more ſlender crop than was commonly imagined: ſo that, for ſome time before the laſt harveſt, wheats were much wanted in many parts of the kingdom. The markets every where were thinly ſupplied, and the price greatly advanced. Even with us, there were hardly old wheats ſufficient to ſerve through the harveſt. We were obliged to fall upon the new as ſoon as ever they came

came to hand; but theſe came ſparingly to market; the reaſon of which was, that the harveſt was late; by the time it was over, the farmers wanted to threſh for ſeed and for hogs. There was no interval between harveſt and ſeed-time, for ſupplying the markets, and filling the mills, as uſual, with quantities ſufficient to ſerve till the ſeed-time was over. There was no occaſion to put the law into execution againſt engroſſing. I can aſſure you, Sir, that for ſome time before, and ſince harveſt, I have found it very difficult to get wheat enough to keep my mills going.

Had the harveſt been a fortnight ſooner, or had not the old wheats been ſo near run out, the price would not have got up ſo high with us immediately after harveſt. But the high price before harveſt began, and the opinion which generally prevailed, that it would fall greatly after, made people eager to get off what they had by them, during harveſt, for fear of loſs: ſo that the ſtore-houſes, the mills, the bakers, being all clear, the demand was immediate, and very great. To which if you add, that the country ſoon found the preſent crop to be in many parts bad, in the beſt but indifferent; no where yielding as it commonly does: when theſe things are put together, it is not to be wondered at, that the price ſhould very much advance.

Before I proceed any further, give me leave to aſk, How are people in cities and large towns, and in places which grow but little corn, to get bread, if the meal-men are reſtrained from keeping quantities of corn and flour by them, as theſe writers adviſed them? or what are people, even in the country, to do for bread, during ſeed-time and harveſt? To ſay, that they ſhall buy no more weekly than a limitted quantity, is to talk idly and ignorantly: it ſuppoſes that the markets are equally and conſtantly ſupplied with the ſame quantities of grain, and that the demand is every where uniform and equal: but this is a great miſtake; the farmers bring their corn to market, as it ſuits their intereſt or convenience. We ſhall ſometimes on one market-day have more corn brought in than at other times in three or four; and the call for goods depending in a great meaſure on the winds, is altogether as unequal and uncertain. When the markets are large, what is to be done with the overplus? and, how are people to be furniſhed with bread, when there is little or no corn brought in? or how is bread to be got during ſeed-time and harveſt, which are ſometimes ſooner, ſometimes later; ſometimes finiſhed in a month, and at other times not in two? Theſe conſiderations plainly ſhew, that the ſcheme is impracticable; that were theſe reſtrictions on the meal-men to take place, an univerſal want of bread muſt ſoon follow.

But

But now, you will be ready to aſk, if the ſchemes of theſe writers are merely imaginary, idle and impertinent, may not ſomething be done to reduce the price of grain?— *undoubtedly there may.*—If the high price be owing to a deficiency in the crop, let there be an immediate ſtop put to the exportation of it; ſuffer no Engliſh ſpirits to be made from corn; and let the *ports be opened for the free importation of foreign grain:* and, to check the farmer in his unreaſonable demands, let the *bounty* on *wheat exported ceaſe, when the price exceeds* 8 *l. per load*; and *all exportation, when it exceeds* 12 *l.*

I have now gone through with what I undertook: and as I know that you, Sir, are well acquainted with the world, have juſt ideas of the importance of commerce, are zealous to promote it, in all its uſeful branches, and unwilling it ſhould ſuffer by the miſrepreſentations of ignorant, prejudiced, or theoretic writers — conſcious, at the ſame time, of my own honeſt intentions, and that I have ſaid nothing but what I know to be fact, I do, with much pleaſure, lay theſe obſervations before you, and take the liberty to ſubſcribe myſelf,

Your moſt obliged,

Hants, 1757.

and obedient ſervant.

P. S.

P. S. I ſhould have obſerved in p. 14, that mealmen are obliged yearly, and every year, if it can be procured, to lay by a quantity of old wheats before harveſt; as it is well known that new wheat will not make good bread, without a mixture of theſe at leaſt, 'till Chriſtmas, or after.

LETTER

LETTER II.

SIR,

CIrcumſtances are now in much the ſame ſituation they were about nine years ago, when, at your requeſt, I ſent you ſome ſtrictures on ſeveral pamphlets then publiſhed; and on ſeveral letters at that time inſerted in the public papers, relative to the high price of corn: thoſe authors charging it on foreſtallers and engroſſers, meal-men and bakers —I took the liberty to differ from them, and attempted to ſhew that they were miſtaken in their ſentiments, and quite ſtrangers to the queſtion; that they abounded with falſe and idle ſtories invented with the moſt villainous deſign, or proceeding from the moſt profound ignorance and prejudice. Yet, by theſe means, they incited a ſpirit of mobbing at that time in the nation, which tended greatly to enhance the evil complained of, by ſpreading apprehenſions of an approaching famine, and hindering a regular ſupply of the markets.

We now ſee the ſame farce acting over again, only with this difference, that the

rioters having never been called to account, and puniſhed as they deſerve, are grown more bold and daringly miſchievous than ever before. The price of proviſions, it muſt be owned, is very high; but does this afford a reaſon for theſe people to trample the laws under foot? Does this give a ſanction to the ſpoils and plunders of a mad and licentious mob?

The greateſt ſufferers by the high price of proviſions, are the ſober, honeſt, and induſtrious poor, whoſe caſe is really to be pitied; but do we ever find any of this character mixing themſelves with the mobs?

Mobs are made up of the drunken, the lazy, and moſt abandoned part of the people? whoſe caſe is miſrepreſented, and whoſe diſtreſſes are greatly aggravated, or rather created, by certain ſenſeleſs and injudicious writers in the common news-papers.—They urge, in excuſe for theſe rioters, that proviſions are too dear for them to purchaſe; their wives and children ſay they want bread, and it is better to hang than ſtarve.

But, not to take notice of the proviſion made by law for all ſuch as are not in a capacity to maintain themſelves, were wheat at 3 *s.* per buſhel, inſtead of 6 *s.* their wives and children would not be three farthings the better for it.

Yet,

Yet we have writers who endeavour to juſtify thoſe incendiaries in their vileſt practices: they are poor and wretched, no matter by what means: though they refuſe to work, or immediately ſpend what they earn in ſtrong beer and ſpirituous liquors, their poverty, it ſeems, gives them a right to plunder; and (altho' an apoſtle has determined otherwiſe) to feaſt on the fruits of other people's labour.

The news-papers are filled with complaints againſt foreſtallers and engroſſers:—ſome write, and others preach, againſt them; taking it for granted, that there are in reality ſuch men to whoſe acconnt the high price of proviſions is to be charged. But, I take upon me to aver, that this is falſe in fact; it is merely an imaginary evil, and it might as well be charged on the inhabitants of the moon. If there be any one man in the kingdom of a different mind, let him point out where theſe engroſſed quantities are to be found.

Others, and I think with ſome reaſon, charge the high price of proviſions upon the practice of uniting and monopolizing farms; and, perhaps, there is not any one thing that tends more to promote it, or that is attended with worſe conſequences. It is become a common practice with the landed gentlemen, in every part of the kingdom, to throw ſeveral eſtates together, to make capital farms; or for ſeveral landholders to let eſtates, which

lie near together, to one man; whereby the renters are ſo enriched, and their numbers ſo diminiſhed, that it is eaſy for them to form combinations, keep in their corn as long as they pleaſe, (*thraſh'd* corn, from whence the miſchief principally ariſes) govern the markets, and obtain an exorbitant price.

They oftentimes refuſe to ſell their corn, when at market, and hire ſtore-houſes to lodge it in, if they cannot advance the price to their minds: but, perhaps, this evil, ſo far as it relates to the article of grain, may be remedied by a law, ſubjecting the *farmer to a penalty upon his keeping more than a limited quantity of thraſh'd corn by him, any time exceeding a fortnight.*

The miſchief ariſing from the uniting and monopolizing farms, was complained of ſo long ago as the time of Henry the Seventh. In the fourth year of his reign, there was an act made relating to the Iſle of Wight; the preamble to which is very full; and, as it is not a little curious, may not improperly be quoted here, as confirming the above obſervation.

It ſets forth, that, " Foraſmuch as it is to " the king, &c. great ſurety, and alſo the " ſurety of this realm of England, that the " Iſle of Wight be well inhabited with Eng- " liſh people, &c. the which iſle is lately " decayed

" decayed of people, by reaſon that many
" towns and villages have been beaten down,
" and the Fields ditched, &c. and many
" dwelling-places, ferms, and ferm-holds tak-
" en into one man's hands, that of old time
" were wont to be in many ſeveral perſons holds
" and hands, and many ſeveral houſholds
" kept in them, and thereby much people
" multiplied, and the ſame iſle thereby well
" inhabited; the which now, by the occa-
" ſion aforeſaid, is deſolate, and not inhabi-
" ted, but occupied with beaſts and cattle;
" ſo that if haſty remedy be not provided,
" that iſle cannot be kept and defended, but
" will be open and ready to the king's enemies,
" which God forbid:—For remedy whereof
" it is ordained, &c. that from henceforth
" no manner of perſon, of what eſtate, con-
" dition or degree he is, or ſhall be, take
" any ſeveral ferms more than one, of any
" manors, lands and tenements, parſonages
" and tythes within the ſaid iſle, whereof the
" ferm of them altogether ſhall exceed the
" ſum of ten marks yearly, &c. And if any
" perſon do any thing contrary to this act,
" that then the leſſee in that behalf ſhall
" forfeit to the king for every ſuch taking
" 10*l.*"

The 13th of the 25th year of Hen. VIIIth, is formed on the ſame policy. It is entitled, " Of the number of ſheep one ſhould keep." The 14th ſection enacts, " That no man-

" ner

" ner of perſon, after the feaſt of the Nativity " of our Lord, ſhall receive or take in " farm for term of life, years, or at will, by " indenture, copy of court-roll, or otherwiſe, " any more houſes or tenements of huſban- " dry, whereunto lands are belonging, above " two ſuch holds or tenements. And that no " manner of perſon ſhall have or occupy " any ſuch holds, ſo newly taken, to the " number of two, as is before expreſſed, " except he or they be dwelling within the " ſame pariſhes where ſuch holds be," &c.

Lord Bacon, in his hiſtory of Henry VII is full on the grounds and reaſons of theſe meaſures.—The land was, in a great degree, depopulated, and the noble ſpirit of the people, in a great meaſure, deſtroyed, by theſe increaſing monopolies.

So far as any meaſures tend to theſe conſequences, they muſt be inconſiſtent with the happineſs, and, indeed, exiſtence of a free ſtate.

But to return—The charge is ſtill continued againſt the meal-men; but as it cannot be made appear how grinding wheat, and dreſſing meal into flour, any wiſe contributes to riſe the price of it; the mob, and their advocates, dwell chiefly on the adulteration. As a fair diſputant, I would not conceal any thing which may ſeem to make againſt the cauſe

I am

I am defending, and therefore ſhall relate what paſſed at a certain coffee-houſe; where ſeveral being preſent, and the converſation turning upon the wicked practices of the meal-men and bakers, an apothecary, one of the company, cries out with ſome warmth, "Lord have mercy upon us! We ſhall be "all poiſoned; *this flour* will deſtroy half the "nation. I declare againſt uſing a duſt more "of it. Upon examining my ſtools with a "glaſs, I have diſcovered certain moleculæ, "like bits of chalk, in the feces. On my "conſcience, it was arſenic; and I am con-"firmed in this opinion, by what the learned "Dr. Manning * has lately publiſhed to the "world. He has proved, as plainly as words "can do, That not one man in the king-"dom, who has lived upon bakers bread, or "meal-mans flour, has, for theſe ſeven years "paſt, died a natural death; but has been "ſent out of the world by alum, or whit-"ing, or chalk; or by bones picked up in "the ſtreets, or taken from dunghills.—Nay, "the very graves and charnel-houſes have "been ranſacked for bones, which, being "dried and ground to powder, the bakers "have mixed with flour, and made into "bread! It is for this reaſon," continues the doctor, "we hear of ſo many ſudden deaths;

* A fictitious name to a pamphlet, publiſhed ſome years ago, by a writer, who, like the bottle-conjurer, was willing to try how far the force of credulity would go.

" ſo many new, and, till lately, unheard-of
" diſtempers, for which we have no name;
" which puzzle all the gentlemen of the fa-
" culty, and elude their art.—And, to ſpeak
" the truth, Ward's Pill and Drop, the Berk-
" leian Medicine, and James's Powder, have
" been all tried in vain.—Nay, what is more,
" neither *Elixir of Bardana*, which Dr. Hill
" tells us, has done wonders; nor *Balſam of Ho-*
" *ney*, nor *Tincture of Sage*, which he has never
" found to fail in the moſt deſperate Caſes,
" have any more efficacy than powder of poſt.
" To which let me add a noſtrum of my
" own, with which I have done greater cures
" than ever were done by Galen or Æſcula-
" pius; but when adminiſtered in theſe diſ-
" orders, they have rather been heightened
" by it. Now, gentlemen," concludes the apothecary, " what perſon in his ſenſes, but
" would buy his wheat in the market, and
" make his own bread?"

Can any thing exceed this! See, O ye mealmen, who have contrived ſo many ways, and been at *ſuch an expence to cleanſe the wheats you grind, and render them pure and wholeſome*; and you bakers, what an opinion this learned gentleman entertains of you, and your profeſſions; and there are others, in divers parts of the kingdom, altogether as learned and as knowing, who believe the ſame things; for learned men may, and many of them do, believe as the mob believe,

" without

without knowing what, or wherefore. I ſhall not attempt to diſprove the charge, and ſhew the nonſenſe of theſe things. If maids will believe in fortune-tellers, and men in quacks and conjurors, who can help it?

I ſhall only take notice, that in every large mill throughout the kingdom, there are loads of ſtuff, in the year, *ſeparated from*, and *taken out of*, *the wheats ground for flour*, *equally as pernicious*, perhaps, to health, as any one of the abovementioned articles; which thoſe, who buy their wheats in the market, and make their own bread, ſwallow their ſhare of. This is *fact*, and cannot be denied.

Although the corn trade be of vaſt importance, and a capital conſideration, to the commercial and landed intereſt, yet whenever there is a great deficiency in the crop, as is the caſe this year, and wheat gets up to 12 *l.* per load, it is certainly wrong policy to give money for carrying it out of the land; or even to permit it to be done.

Every one ſeems ſenſible of this; and it is expected, from the wiſdom and integrity of Parliament, ſomething will be done, to reduce the high price of corn. Proclamations againſt foreſtallers and engroſſers, I am confident, will do nothing towards it. The beſt expedient, perhaps, that can be thought of, as was

obſerved in the former letter, is to put an entire *ſtop to the exportation of all grain*; to ſuffer *none to be made uſe of* in the diſtillery, till after another harveſt; and, for the future, to limit the bounty to a lower price. When wheat exceeds 8 *l.* per load, none ſhould be allowed; when it exceeds 12 *l.* no exportation. This would be a double check upon the farmers; the beſt means to prevent their extravagant demands, and obviate the juſt complaints of the poor, and all others.

To have public granaries in every county for laying up corn, and public mills to grind it for the benefit of the poor, is a ſcheme which has been propoſed by ſome and recommended by many: and, undoubtedly, theſe, under the care and directions of proper officers—*commiſſioners*, *comptrollers*, *agents*, and their *clerks* and *deputies*, would be an excellent inſtitution, and anſwer moſt valuable purpoſes to *ſome*, though, I will not anſwer for it that the poor, or the public, would be much the better for it.

You have here, ſir my thoughts on the noiſe and clamour that has been lately made through the nation, pretendedly on account of the high price of corn. I am not ſenſible that I have omitted to take notice of any thing which has the leaſt appearance of argument urged by the mob, or any one of their advocates. But, there is one thing I beg leave

to ſpeak to before I conclude—If it be for the public good that a bounty be given with wheat exported; if it be a maxim, adopted by every wiſe and ſenſible ſtate, that no one article of its produce, if poſſible, be exported unmanufactured, we have certainly been guilty of great inconſiſtency of conduct, with reſpect to the corn trade. The bounty on flour being in no wiſe equal to the bounty on wheat: and with ſhip-biſket, there was no bounty at all ever given. Why this was not done at firſt, is not difficult to account for; why it has not been done ſince, is not eaſy to ſay. Could all the wheat that is ſent abroad, or the greateſt part of it, be firſt manufactured into flour and biſket, the advantages ariſing from them to the nation, would be unſpeakably great *, but too many to be particularized, and too obvious to need it.

I am, Sir, &c.

Hants, Nov. 1,
1766.

* Large quantities of ſacks, caſks, &c. will be wanted, and a great number of hands, &c. have employment in providing theſe things; and, what is of conſiderable conſequence, the bran, pollard, &c. will be kept at home, to feed horſes and hogs; whereby oats will be ſaved, and meat rendered cheaper.

P. S.

P. S. Some friends to the export, but not approving the *bounty* as it ſtands at preſent, have thought that the varying it, as the price of wheat varies, *e. g.* giving a larger bounty when the price is low, and a leſſer as the price advances, would be attended with conſiderable advantage, and have given in their ſchemes accordingly: but how well ſoever theſe may appear in theory, there is one objection lying againſt them all, that they cannot be reduced to practice. The different qualities of corn, the different prices in different markets belonging to the ſame port, and in the ſame market often the ſame day, will render it extremely difficult, if not impoſſible, to aſcertain the bounty-price, beſides the great temptations it would open to colluſive practices.

ADDENDUM.

ADDENDUM.

IT ſhould have been remarked, under the head of exportation, that it has been owing to the encouragement given by the bounty to this commerce that our lands have been ſo well cultivated, and ſuch quantities of corn produced, as to prevent the diſtreſſes to which this kingdom was often before unhappily expoſed; and to relieve other countries, to which we had been forced to apply for ſupport.

The policy of the French inſtituted by Monſ. Colbert, has been conducted on a different plan; and the conſequences have been anſwerable. While we have been bleſt with cheapneſs and plenty, they have often been pining with want, and have been obliged to pay us more than a million at a time to keep themſelves from actual ſtarving. But matters now begin to wear a very different face: France, warned by experience, and jealous of our advantages, is giving all poſſible attention and encouragement to *tillage*; and has ſo far ſucceded as to be able, in the laſt year, not only to ſupply the demands of her own iſlands and provinces, but to ſend great quantities to England and foreign markets. A French merchant of Havre writes thus in a letter before me:

" Enfin

" Enfin voila donc un evenement arrivé, " qu'on n'auroit jamais pû croire, que la " France qui tous les ans, recevoit de l'An- " gleterre une grande partie de Bléd et de " farine, ſoit en etat *aujourd'huy* de fournir " ces memes vivres a ce pays *reputé*, avec " raiſon, la grenier de l'Europe ; il ſort de " nos ports une quantité conſiderable de Bléd " et de farine pour l'Angleterre, et pour " l'Irelande ; et aprés avoir eſté chargé de " vendre icy ces marchandiſes. Je puis être " chargé d'en acheter et d'envoyer, et c'eſt " ce que je fais."

FINIS.